

# Beowulf

## XXIV

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**BEOWULF** spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:--  
"Lo, now, this sea-booty, son of Healfdene,  
Lord of Scyldings, we've lustily brought thee,  
sign of glory; thou seest it here.  
Not lightly did I with my life escape!  
In war under water this work I essayed  
with endless effort; and even so  
my strength had been lost had the Lord not shielded me.  
Not a whit could I with Hrunting do  
in work of war, though the weapon is good;  
yet a sword the Sovran of Men vouchsafed me  
to spy on the wall there, in splendor hanging,  
old, gigantic, -- how oft He guides  
the friendless wight! -- and I fought with that brand,  
felling in fight, since fate was with me,  
the house's wardens. That war-sword then  
all burned, bright blade, when the blood gushed o'er it,  
battle-sweat hot; but the hilt I brought back  
from my foes. So avenged I their fiendish deeds  
death-fall of Danes, as was due and right.  
And this is my hest, that in Heorot now  
safe thou canst sleep with thy soldier band,  
and everythane of all thy folk  
both old and young; no evil fear,  
Scyldings' lord, from that side again,  
ought ill for thy earls, as erst thou must!"  
Then the golden hilt, for that gray-haired leader,  
hoary hero, in hand was laid,  
giant-wrought, old. So owned and enjoyed it  
after downfall of devils, the Danish lord,  
wonder-smiths' work, since the world was rid  
of that grim-souled fiend, the foe of God,  
murder-marked, and his mother as well.  
Now it passed into power of the people's king,  
best of all that the oceans bound  
who have scattered their gold o'er Scandia's isle.  
Hrothgar spake -- the hilt he viewed,  
heirloom old, where was etched the rise  
of that far-off fight when the floods o'erwhelmed,  
raging waves, the race of giants  
(fearful their fate!), a folk estranged  
from God Eternal: whence guerdon due  
in that waste of waters the Wielder paid them.

So on the guard of shining gold  
in runic staves it was rightly said  
for whom the serpent-traced sword was wrought,  
best of blades, in bygone days,  
and the hilt well wound. -- The wise-one spake,  
son of Healfdene; silent were all:--

"Lo, so may he say who sooth and right  
follows 'mid folk, of far times mindful,  
a land-warden old, [footnote 1] that this earl belongs  
to the better breed! So, borne aloft,  
thy fame must fly, O friend my Beowulf,  
far and wide o'er folksteads many. Firmly thou shalt all maintain,  
mighty strength with mood of wisdom. Love of mine will I assure thee,  
as, awhile ago, I promised; thou shalt prove a stay in future,  
in far-off years, to folk of thine,  
to the heroes a help. Was not Heremod thus  
to offspring of Ecgwela, Honor-Scyldings,  
nor grew for their grace, but for grisly slaughter,  
for doom of death to the Danishmen.  
He slew, wrath-swollen, his shoulder-comrades,  
companions at board! So he passed alone,  
chieftain haughty, from human cheer.  
Though him the Maker with might endowed,  
delights of power, and uplifted high  
above all men, yet blood-fierce his mind,  
his breast-hoard, grew, no bracelets gave he  
to Danes as was due; he endured all joyless  
strain of struggle and stress of woe,  
long feud with his folk. Here find thy lesson!  
Of virtue advise thee! This verse I have said for thee,  
wise from lapsed winters. Wondrous seems  
how to sons of men Almighty God  
in the strength of His spirit sendeth wisdom,  
estate, high station: He swayeth all things.  
Whiles He letteth right lustily fare  
the heart of the hero of high-born race, --  
in seat ancestral assigns him bliss,  
his folk's sure fortress in fee to hold,  
puts in his power great parts of the earth,  
empire so ample, that end of it  
this wanter-of-wisdom weeneth none.  
So he waxes in wealth, nowise can harm him  
illness or age; no evil cares  
shadow his spirit; no sword-hate threatens  
from ever an enemy: all the world

wends at his will, no worse he knoweth,  
till all within him obstinate pride  
waxes and wakes while the warden slumbers,  
the spirit's sentry; sleep is too fast  
which masters his might, and the murderer nears,  
stealthily shooting the shafts from his bow!

**Footnotes.**

**1.**

That is, "whoever has as wide authority as I have and can remember so far back so many instances of heroism, may well say, as I say, that no better hero ever lived than Beowulf."